

AN ADAPTATION GROUP FOR MIDDLE-AGED CLIENTS FROM THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

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Emigres from the former Soviet Union are able to participate in group therapy if the group process is not initiated by the leader but is a spontaneous byproduct of some more emotionally neutral process, such as lectures or group activities. The goal of the group described in this article was to help its middle-aged members break out of their isolation and adapt to their new country. To reach this goal, several modalities were applied in turn and together—lectures, regular group process, cultural activities, and finally transition to a self-help group.

This wasn't, as it might seem, another lost generation. This was the only generation of Russians that found itself.

Joseph Brodsky
Less Than One (1986, p. 29)

At present, mental health clinics serving clients from the former Soviet Union (FSU) have to cope with often overwhelming numbers of middle-aged immigrants presenting with symptoms of high anxiety and depression. The majority of these clients need psychotropic medication for prolonged periods of time. Although individual psychodynamic therapy concentrating on the mourning of losses and their possible repair has proven to be quite effective for these clients, the need to provide efficient help to large numbers of these clients necessitated an attempt to use the group modality. And, in fact, it seemed appropriate to work through the emigration problems together with peers for whom this experience also happened to be traumatizing.

Anna Halberstadt and Lena Mandel (1989), describing their experience in leading a psychotherapy group of Soviet emigre widows, concluded that the suspiciousness and hostility characteristic of the emigre community did not let group members share their feelings. This author had a similar discouraging experience with a group of young mothers whose marriages went into

crisis after emigration. These women's ability to share was limited only to information on community resources they all were interested in, such as legal aid, child care facilities, and the like.

On the other hand, there has been a positive experience in a group for battered women from the FSU that was run by NYANA. However, all these group members had had an opportunity to develop a good rapport and trustful relationship with the leader in individual therapy with her conducted before the group began. Our adaptation group needed to be more inclusive.

One helpful clue was found in a successful time-limited educational group for parents from the FSU held under the auspices of the Jewish Family Services of Boston (Irene Belozersky, personal communication). This group discussed major problematic areas of parenting for emigre parents. The group leader encouraged the parents to ask questions. In the course of spontaneous discussions the parents started to share their difficulties and to receive the support of group members.

It seemed that the group process became possible because sharing was not a formal goal of the group and was not demanded by the group leader. Seen by these clients as an authority figure, the group leader is immediately associated by Soviet emigres with forced ideological indoctrination, which

was always done in groups. In contrast, this group process spontaneously developed on the members' own initiative and evolved as a byproduct of an emotionally neutral process, in this case lectures.

Relying on this positive experience, a time-limited educational group for middle-aged emigres was planned. It was to cover topics related to three main areas: (1) psychological problems at different stages of the immigrant's adaptation; (2) differences in American and Soviet views and values concerning family roles, education, money, the role of work, and religion; and (3) problems of identity—as a person from the FSU, as a Soviet Jew, and as a new American (Table 1).

The initial group had 18 members who were from 50 to 65 years of age. All were professionals from the large cities, mainly from the Ukraine and Belarus. There were also a few Moscovites and former residents of St. Petersburg.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PROFILE OF THE GROUP

These group members belong to the generation born and raised in the Stalin years when the Soviet totalitarian society was in full force. Yet, their youth coincided with the "thaw" of post-Stalinism when the country was slowly opening to the world, when repression subsided, and the Communist ideology started to lose its power over the Soviet population. The Nobel Prize-winning poet Joseph Brodsky (1986, p. 18) wrote about this—his own—generation:

We emerged from under the post-war rubble when the state was too busy patching its own skin and could not look after us very well. We entered schools, and whatever elevated rubbish we were taught there, the suffering and poverty were visible all around. The empty windows gaped at us like skulls' orbits, and as little as we were, we sensed tragedy....The amount of goods was very limited, but not having known otherwise, we did not mind it. Bikes were old, of prewar

make, and the owner of a soccer ball was considered a bourgeois. The coats and underwear that we wore were cut out by our mothers from our fathers' uniforms and patched drawers: exit Sigmund Freud. So we did not develop taste for possessions.... We never had a room of our own to lure our girls into, nor did our girls have rooms. Our love affairs were mostly walking and talking affairs; it would make an astronomical sum if we were charged for mileage....We never had what are called "material stimuli"....If somebody sold himself out, it was not for the sake of goods or comfort: there were none. He was selling out because of inner want and he knew that himself.

These recent emigres shared several common features:

- They had felt a part and a parcel of the Soviet system, believed in the Soviet ideology, identified with it, and learned to succeed in it.
- As a rule, they had neither much motivation nor much preparation for emigration. They either felt forced to follow the families of their children or fled from fear of the total impoverishment that became the fate of their generation under perestroika, with its economic chaos, rampant inflation, rising anti-Semitism, and nationalist wars.
- They encountered a tight American job market. Their quite poor health narrowed their chances for successful employment even further.
- They had successful careers in the past and had built their identities mainly around their roles at work. The loss of social status after emigration was a devastating blow to their self-esteem.
- All experienced psychological problems of varying severity in these initial periods of adaptation.

In addition the former citizens of Ukraine and Belarus had experienced the Chernobyl catastrophe accompanied by widespread ra-

Table 1. Discussion Topics of the Adaptation Group

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1. Different reasons for emigration (economic reasons; safety; psychological reasons: separation; uniting factor for unstable families; realization of creative potential; marginality; criminality). How a decision on emigration was made? Initiator of emigration.
 2. Emigrants and refugees. Personal features of well-adapting emigrants: positive attitude toward risk taking; ability to be alone and/or ability to easily connect with people; curiosity; love of changes.
 3. Stages of emigration.
 - Transit places and time in transit.
 - Initial stage of resettlement. Main task—satisfaction of physical needs. Psychological aspects: possible changes in family roles; “division of labor” between one mastering the new life and one keeping ties with the past (together they provide a needed mix of the old and new). Defenses: euphoria, nostalgic idealization of the past, withdrawal.
 4. Need for mourning of emigration losses. Refusal to mourn as a reason for crisis in later stages of resettlement.
 5. Image of America and Americans before the emigration and after it. Pre-emigration clichéd ideas of future adaptation: “I’ll learn language just by living there,” “I am ready to do any work,” “children will adapt as easily as fish swims in water,” “I’ll solve all my personal problems there,” “Everyone is well-to-do there,” “our children will get excellent education,” “American medicine can cure any illness,” etc.

Rejection of the realistic feedback information from those who left earlier.

How Americans see the Russian emigrants? Our feelings regarding their attitude to us. How we see Americans?
 6. Our Jewish identity. What meant for you to be a Jew in the Soviet Union? Differences in preservation of Jewish traditions in different areas of the FSU, in families of different social stratas and cultural background.
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diation-disease phobia and real deterioration of the population’s health. As children during the Nazi occupation they suffered through evacuation under fire, witnessed atrocities, or even lived in concentration camps. Some lost numerous family members in the Holocaust. Yet, this past included not only hardships but also pride for their victorious country and admiration for their soldier fathers and their enduring mothers.

STAGES IN THE LIFE OF THE GROUP

Originally, the group was to meet for thirteen sessions, each having its own topic of discussion as shown in Table 1. The therapist hoped to realize these three goals during these sessions: (1) normalization of the clients’ feelings about their emigration experience, (2) familiarization of the clients with the values of a democratic society and group rules reflecting these values, and (3) beginning of the mourning of losses and

separations caused by emigration.

When the thirteen weeks were coming to an end, the group anxiously searched for a way to continue its work together as the members had reached some degree of cohesion and mutual trust and felt the need to continue their discussions. The group recontracted as an open-ended psychotherapy group. In the course of the next five months the group members worked through their early feelings of deprivation, their losses, and their identity confusion as Jewish members of a mass society indoctrinated in Communist theories who had a weak and negative Jewish identity.

After this time, the group recontracted again for a three-month transitional period during which the center of gravity shifted first to discussions of separations and losses both in their families and in the life of their group. Later, the repair of losses became the central theme of discussions and group activities.

In this period some time was devoted to reorganization of this therapy group into a self-help group. I informed the group about the self-help group movement and the rules of these groups. The group established its new rules and elected its officers.

Having celebrated its first anniversary, the group continues to meet once a month at the clinic. Some group members have formed enduring friendships.

Three important aspects of the group process are described in detail below: (1) working through the emigration experience, (2) dealing with the group members' identities as individuals formed by a totalitarian society and as Jews, and (3) the group's transition to American society.

WORKING THROUGH THE EMIGRATION EXPERIENCE

Emigration from the Object Relations Point of View

Leon and Rebecca Grinberg, in their *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile* (1989), compare emigres losing their country with children separated for too long from their caring object; they lack a mother to allay their anxieties: "The new country is unknown and cannot always offer... containment and support he had hoped for or idealized in his expectations" (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989, p. 15). The emigre feels excluded, homesick, and lonely, undergoing ego disorganization. The process of adaptation is seen by the authors as ego reorganization, which is mastered by some individuals faster than by others. This capacity for reorganization is connected by the authors with the ability to be alone, conceptualized by D. Winnicott (1958). This capacity depends on whether a person was able to internalize a "good enough" mother, responsive but not smothering, and how he or she was able to master aggression and jealousy.

In the group discussions, feelings of exclusion and humiliation were frequently expressed. Natural curiosity, the ability to make new friends, and other personal qualities that make emigration easier or more

difficult also were discussed.

Normalization of the Emigration Experience

In group discussion, emigration was described as a process well known to humanity from time immemorial. The exile of Adam and Eve from paradise was only the first symbol of migration (Grinberg & Grinberg, 1989). Losses of the familiar, the habitual way of life, of security are the high price of this change. On the other hand, migrants are free to explore and populate new lands, build a new life for themselves and their children, and to participate in creation as symbolized in the Bible by the domestication of plants and animals. Group member Rakhil's remark expressed the common feeling of the group: "If even Adam and Eve were emigrants, so we should manage somehow!"

Loss and Abandonment

Loss was a prominent theme of group discussions. Patriotism was expressed very frequently, and emigration was perceived as forced. "They don't let me love Russia and Ukraine, which I loved," complained Rakhil. Mark said, "We lost our country not only through emigration but through the change. The country I have lived in does not exist anymore."

Fear of further losses and abandonment was expressed in the group's life. Any member's absence from the meeting or the therapist's vacation caused anxiety, sadness, and suspicion of being abandoned. These emotions became an issue, and the group eventually understood the connection of these feelings in the here and now with their past numerous losses.

Problems of Separation

Their own children's possible independence was seen by the group members only in negative terms: as reflecting their neglect of their children and their children's abandonment of them as aging parents. Their

memories of their childhoods as full of hardships and deprivations strengthened their determination to protect their children from these experiences. In the FSU, such protection and help used to be expressed by giving financial assistance, pulling strings to get their children a state apartment or giving them money to buy a cooperative apartment, babysitting, standing in line for consumer goods, or getting them through connections. Thus, the economy built on the shortage of consumer goods and on the rewards of seniority strengthened paternalism in the Soviet family. Consider this case example.

Shura even today comes regularly to clean her daughter's apartment. The daughter is a single woman of 29. She does not work long hours, nor is she physically frail in any way. But Shura holds onto this help with cleaning to feel that she can still contribute to her daughter's well-being and, by the way, to watch what's going on in her daughter's life and to advise her, i.e., to treat her still as a child.

Thus, members had difficulty seeing their children as separate persons with their own needs and desires. As this theme was extremely painful for the group members, it was discussed only in bits and pieces.

One of the most important discussions in that respect was a meeting held after Rakhil had come back from visiting her married children in San Francisco. She spoke about feeling alive and joyful only there. The group and the therapist validated her feelings. Andrey expressed envy as visiting his only daughter who was living in Israel was impossible for financial reasons.

Lev shared that he had come to the painful conclusion that in this country it would be better to let adult children to have their own way. Shura and Mark bitterly spoke about the lack of concern for them on the part of their children. The therapist raised the question whether we wanted to raise car-

ing adults or just wanted to protect our children from the hard and dangerous world. Borukh instead switched to his own experience—how his poor and hard-working parents wanted to protect him from hardships but could not do too much. He had to move from his shtetl to a big city and fight for himself. The therapist acknowledged that the memory of our own deprivations did not let us to permit our children to take their own risks in life.

At the same time, the group members had a clear understanding of still being on duty as members of the "sandwich generation"—being already middle aged but still having obligations to their children and to their fragile parents.

Rakhil's hardships are an example. She held a job, helped raise her grandchildren, and looked after her elderly parents. Under this stress she became depressed, regressed into agoraphobia, and developed many physical ailments. The group members commiserated with her and advised her to set some limits on the help given to her parents, which she, to some degree, was able to do. Ninel and Nina, as the group eventually learned, were at this point in their life living only with their mothers, both in their eighties, and were their only caretakers. They found some support in the group but, even more, in each other.

A VIEW OF PEOPLE FROM A TOTALITARIAN SOCIETY

The group members were born to parents who lived through World War I, the Civil War, famines, collectivization, and Stalin purges—social calamities comparable in devastation to the Nazis' terror of World War II. Here are examples of their backgrounds:

Shraga, a woman from Vilnius, was deported, as a child with her family from Lithuania to Siberia when her country was taken over by the USSR in 1939 after the

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact; Lev, Andrey, Shura, and Mark lost their fathers in the war; Ninel and Nina for several years waited anxiously to learn whether their fathers would return or perish at the front; Borukh was born in an Ukrainian labor camp where he lived the first two years of his life; Mark and his brother lived in an orphanage for several years because their widowed mother could not support them; Ninel, Shura, and Mark shared memories of long periods when they were preoccupied with feelings of hunger; and Lev witnessed numerous deaths when the Nazis bombed their barge even though it bore a Red Cross flag.

Because of such experiences, it was essential to address the problems in making the transition from a totalitarian society to one requiring independence and more democratic and more mutually respectful interpersonal relationships. Even the establishment of such general rules as confidentiality and safety from personal questions sent a message of treating others with respect and set the stage for introducing new, more democratic attitudes.

Equality versus Hierarchy

One important feature of a mass society is its complicated hierarchy of groups with different levels of power and privileges (Bettelheim, 1960). In our adaptation group, we could expect the establishment of a hierarchy by cities of origin and by career achievements. For example, in my experience working with another such group, a highly successful professor of engineering listed all his achievements in front of intimidated group members, who then refused to continue their group treatment after this "show."

To prevent such a scenario from recurring, I addressed directly "our" Soviet habit of putting down others while establishing a hierarchy of power and success. I tried to join my clients as another former member of a totalitarian society formed by the same forces.

Passivity and Helplessness

According to Bruno Bettelheim (1960), these traits are induced by constant threats of punishment rather than punishment itself. This situation causes childlike feelings of helplessness and fills people with impotent rage, which is disastrous for an adult personality.

For example, after meeting for four months the group decided that it wanted to engage in some cultural activities together. They decided to see the Metropolitan Museum of Art and requested that I accompany them. I saw this desire as a restorative step and wanted to support it. We agreed that the group members should take on themselves the logistics of arranging the trip from their Brooklyn homes to the museum. This seemingly easy task proved to be too hard for these former professionals and middle-level managers. Only four people out of twelve were able to come, a subgroup of more functional members. Their attempts to assist members unable to travel independently were half-hearted.

These four group members enjoyed their excursion. At the next group meeting, the other members expressed their embarrassment and shamefully spoke of their helplessness that prevented them from coming. With their typical ambivalence, they wanted to continue these excursions, but did not believe in their ability to organize their travel; they hinted that I better meet them at the clinic and take them to the city. I supported their desire to see places, but insisted on them assuming their share of responsibility.

Later the group made two more trips—to the Museum of Modern Art and to Soho galleries. They finally were able to organize their travels more independently. These contacts with the cultural richness of New York were important steps in restoration of their cultural life and gave them a message of openness and accessibility of this fascinating new culture.

After eight months, because of administrative regulations, the group members had to choose between the group and individual

therapy. The majority were still on medication and suffering from depressive symptoms. They were not able to abandon their individual treatment but expressed sadness about losing the group. I offered to help them make a transition to a self-help group if they chose to do so.

Characteristically, the group had difficulty making this choice. On one hand, they did not believe in themselves. "It will be boring," predicted Shura, an energetic industrial manager in the past. "You'll see, without you no one will come," added Ninel. Rakhil believed that they needed a leader who knew more about this new life than the group members.

On the other hand, "the authorities" had suggested the self-help group and they better be obeyed. In this way, paradoxically, the independent activities of these dependent people were spurred—in a typically Russian manner—from above, just like Gorbachev's perestroika. Now, six months after the clinical group's termination, the self-help group still meets monthly.

PROBLEMS OF IDENTITY

"We are nobodies, we are *sovki*," Lev once said bitterly (*sovki* is the plural form of *sovok*, a rather derogatory name for a typical person from the FSU). In the past, almost all these people shared a belief in the Communist system, were part of it, and succeeded in it. Now they felt ashamed of their past beliefs. Rakhil and Manya felt that they had no way to know better as they did not belong to intellectual circles where the forbidden literature circulated. Lev, Mark, and Andrey saw their conformity as an expression of their loyalty to their fathers who had died in World War II for our Soviet motherland. However, in the end, they all felt servile to the system.

According to Bruno Bettelheim (1960), the totalitarian system suppresses its citizens' powers of reasoning and observation and demands that they ignore the mistreatment of others. The group members frequently spoke about their own sufferings

from anti-Semitism, but never paid much attention to other victims of the system. Their views may be seen as a rationalization of their identification with the aggressor state that rewarded them with some degree of power and safety.

Still, these group members said that they felt ashamed of themselves. The poet Brodsky (1986, p. 10) describes it thusly:

That is the ultimate triumph of the system: whether you beat it or join it, you feel equally guilty.... Ambivalence, I think, is the chief characteristic of my nation. There isn't a Russian executioner who isn't scared of turning victim one day, nor is there a sorriest victim who would not acknowledge (if only to himself) a mental ability to become an executioner.

This feeling of humiliation accompanied our group members into emigration. Here they came too late in life to succeed, and the stresses of emigration sped up their aging process. Because they saw themselves as unable to contribute to the society by work, they felt like redundant "nobodies," as their main identification had been through work. Their aging and regression due to illness increased their fear of independence. After many discussions, Shraga said, "If we knew in advance that there would be no way not to work, we would adapt better, we would learn English faster." Many members believe that the fear of losing benefits paralyzed their efforts to find a job.

A "negative Jewish identity," a term coined by late Edgar Goldstein (1984) is now accepted as typical for Soviet Jews. It stems from ignorance of the Jewish culture, as well as the perception that one's Jewishness was the source of negative influences on life. Again Brodsky (1986, p. 8-9) eloquently describes this phenomenon:

I was ashamed of the word "Jew"—in Russian, "yevrey"—regardless of its connotation. In printed Russian "yevrey" appears nearly as seldom as, say, "mediastinum" or "gennel" in American English. In fact, it

also has something like the status of a four-letter word or like a name for a VD...I always felt a lot easier with a Russian equivalent of "kike"—"zhyd"...It was clearly offensive. All this is not to say that I suffered as a Jew at that tender age; it's simply to say that my first lie had to do with my identity.

This is just one example of the trimming of the self that ...bred in us such an overpowering sense of ambivalence that in ten years we ended up with a willpower in no way superior to a seaweed.

The majority of the group members shared these feelings. The group discussions of their Jewish identity always were permeated by feelings of exclusion and humiliation. Many times they spoke with regret of their ignorance of Jewish culture and, in fact, felt persecuted just for one word in their passports. In the United States, their ignorance alienated them from the American Jewish community.

When discussing choices for the future, Lev spoke of his desire to learn more about his Jewish heritage. Ninel chose the same option. Yuriy had an opposite opinion: "There we had to suffer as Jews. And here we are given a chance to forget about being Jews, and I'll use this chance. I am an internationalist, and want to be just an American, like anyone else. And this group is not the place to discuss Jewish cultural issues. If someone is interested in those, let them enroll in Torah studies." Earlier, Yuriy shared how his military career had been destroyed when he had not used an opportunity to register himself as a Christian Russian. He felt that he had paid too high a price for his almost nonexistent Jewish identity.

On the other hand, those group members who came from areas where Jewish culture had survived to some degree—Lithuania and tiny Ukrainian shtetls—felt less torn.

In a totalitarian society an individual acts mainly under external pressure, so freedom in that society was often expressed by group members as *freedom from adaptation*

and change. Borukh, Lev, and Shura wistfully expressed the desire to be accepted as they were. The need to adapt, to change was perceived as another expression of their servility, now to the democratic society.

Wearing a mask is one of the defenses used by individuals in a totalitarian society. It was dangerous to express genuine feelings, to stand out, or to be conspicuous in any way. Our group members expressed awareness about their need to wear a mask. The core of group process—the sharing of feelings—seemed impossible and unnecessary in the beginning. "I'll not participate in this strip tease of the soul," Lev announced in disgust. "Don't believe that we say all the truth," warned Gennady. "We are hiding behind many screens." Still, the group process took off, and many painful feelings were shared eventually. At termination, the group members spoke several times about having become closer and caring about each other, just because they now knew more about each other. Still, some members continued to express the desire not to expose themselves. Ninel who sometimes shared her difficulties spontaneously later would become ashamed and frightened: "Now they all know how infantile I am. I don't want to see these people anymore." She continued to attend the group and be active in the group process, but each time had to overcome a desire to hide, to cut herself off this group.

PRACTICE ISSUES

As the group leader, I was in many ways just like the group members: a middle-aged emigrant from the same country, speaking their language, who was formed by the same society. I tried to strengthen this identification by uniting with the group members: "we" spoke about "our problems," "our difficulties with our children," and the like. It was both a way to permit the clients to feel equal and respected and an expression of the undeniable fact of having lived in the same country for forty years.

At the same time, I was seen as an authority figure: as a professional and as an "oldtimer" immigrant. The group members expected my paternalistic protection and help in exchange for their obedience. As Rakhil said while discussing a transition to self-help group, "No, nothing will come out of it. We don't know this life, and thus cannot help each other. Someone should lead us into it by hand." Shura and Manya said that they believed that without their leader group meetings would become boring.

My psychological interpretations were met with interest but often with disbelief. For example, after a painful conversation on losses of relatives in the Holocaust, Ninel suddenly switched a conversation to her fight with roach infestation of her apartment. Extermination, aggression, and the failure to exterminate both people and insects were connected in my interpretation, which the group had difficulty accepting. Lev hinted to his neighbor that I was going crazy. It was said audibly enough for me to hear, but was denied when I asked him to discuss it.

My feelings toward the group members were mixed. On the one hand, I had a desire to help the group members work through their losses, to take a more active and positive stance in American society, and to help each other. On the other hand, it was genuinely hard for me to accept their statements that they continued to believe in Communist values through all these years and that only emigration made them understand they had been deceived. Of course, I understood that their access to information was even more limited than mine as they lived in provincial cities and did not know foreign languages. Still, I frequently wondered, Who of my clients had been a party member in the past? Who possibly made passionate ideological speeches at meetings? Was any former KGB informant among us? These thoughts were not unique to me, but besieged the group members too, as I knew from their individual therapy. I had to remind myself that all these consid-

erations belonged to the past, in which such people would make dangerous any sincere conversation. Now all the group members were just new emigrants struggling with their adjustment to their new society.

CONCLUSION

The experience of this adaptation group shows that emigrants from FSU are able to participate in group therapy, but on some conditions and with some limitations. The group process cannot be initiated by a group leader, but rather must be a spontaneous byproduct of some more emotionally neutral process, such as lectures or activities.

Sharing is further limited by the fact that in the emigre community people know each other and are afraid of gossip. However, there was no breach of confidentiality in the entire year of this group's existence.

Usually, one important goal of group therapy is improvement of socialization skills and interpersonal relationships of its members. This group had a different goal—to help people with adequate social skills break out from their isolation in their new country. In order to reach this goal, several modalities were applied in turn and together: lectures, regular group process, cultural activities, and, finally, transition to a self-help group.

Special attention should be paid to helping the group operate in a more democratic way—with more mutual respect and without snobbery and animosity. Such a group, if successful, becomes a school of better attitudes toward each other, which has a healing effect on recent emigrants in need of support.

The group was able to work through traumatic experiences of this generation. Emigration as the most recent stressful event was addressed first. Then the group turned its attention to their early deprivations and wartime losses and then to the Chernobyl catastrophe.

While mourning of losses was an important part of our work, not less important was the very intensive struggle around those

qualities that they saw as connected to their being docile members of the mass society. Their obedience, lack of initiative, and difficulties making choices were adaptive or at least tolerable qualities back in the FSU. Now they proved to be a hindrance, a source of shame.

The need to change, to adapt to the new society was recognized, but caused ambivalent feelings. After having worn all their life a mask of conformity, many group members saw adaptation not as a process of searching for new values or an opportunity to develop new qualities and absorb a different culture, but rather as a need to form a new mask to hide their old personality. This need was resented. At the same time, processes of genuine adaptation and repair also began. The group members were learning English, knew more about the Jewish heritage, and started to explore American culture. All these complex and confusing changes were expressed and explored at group meetings.

Finally, this group provided its members with an opportunity to socialize and even to make new close friends in their new country. In many ways, the group meetings represented a transitional space—neither the old, nor the new country but both of them at the same time, which helped these emigrants pose and look at their change of culture in safety and together.

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